

U.S. NONPROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

JEWELRY CLEANING BASKET

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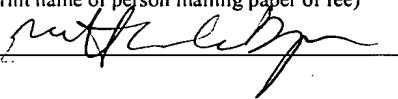
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Cross Reference to Related Application

[001] This application is based on and claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/441,423, filed January 21, 2003, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Field of the Invention

[002] The present invention relates, in general, to tools used to hold jewelry during cleaning.

Background of the Invention

[003] Jewelry articles are cleaned with ultrasonic cleaning equipment, high-pressure steam, cleaning solutions, solvents, and other cleaning methods. These cleaning mediums are often inappropriate for extended contact with the skin of the user. Consequently, a number of tools are employed for positioning the jewelry article.

[004] Grasping tools such as long-handled tweezers or hemostats are often used because the jewelry article may be affirmatively positioned for visual inspection and accurate cleaning. The jewelry article often includes a device (e.g., jewel, gemstone) that is affixed by one of a number of means: channel setting, pave setting, prong setting, tension setting, invisible setting, inlay, burnish setting, pick setting, glue setting, and pre-cast setting, etc. Often, the temperature, pressure and vibration of

cleaning loosen a device (e.g., jewel, gemstone) mounted to the jewelry article.

Grasping tools let a loosened jewelry device fall from the mounting, which can cause embarrassment, inconvenience or expense, especially if this loss occurs in the presence of a customer.

[005] To avoid loss of a jewelry device, often an enclosed tool such as a basket is used. As a particular example, a spring-handled basket tool is used that opens a spherical basket formed from two hinged hemispheric wire baskets. Similar or identical spring-handled tools are more generally used for infusing loose tea in a tea cup. These basket tools do avoid the loss of jewelry devices. However, the jewelry article is allowed to tumble within the basket, which may prevent a thorough cleaning or may cause scratching.

[006] Consequently, a significant need exists for an improved jewelry-cleaning tool that accurately positions a jewelry article while capturing any dislodged gemstones or jewels.

Brief Summary of the Invention

[007] The invention overcomes the above-noted and other deficiencies of the prior art by providing a tool for cleaning a jewelry article that affirmatively grasps the article while encompassing the article in a porous enclosure for capture of any jewelry device (e.g., gemstone, jewel, etc.) that should become dislodged during cleaning.

[008] In one aspect of the invention, a spring-handled basket tool includes a clip affixed to the interior of the basket. Thereby, the jewelry article may be inspected or oriented to a cleaning medium. Moreover, the cleaning process has less risk of a mishap, thereby alleviating job stress for the user. In addition, the tool provides the

ability to see the jewelry while under a stream of high pressure steam, enabling one to direct the steam under prongs, inside channel settings, and inside rings, without the loss of gems.

[009] These and other objects and advantages of the present invention shall be made apparent from the accompanying drawings and the description thereof.

Brief Description of the Figures

[010] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention, and, together with the general description of the invention given above, and the detailed description of the embodiments given below, serve to explain the principles of the present invention.

[011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a closed, spring-handled basket tool having an inwardly oriented clip affixed to a basket rim.

[012] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the spring-handled basket tool of FIG. 1 with the handle depressed to open the basket, exposing the clip for insertion of a jewelry article.

[013] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the spring-handled basket tool of FIGS. 1 and 2 with a jewelry article grasped and enclosed.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[014] FIGS. 1-3 depict a tool 10 for holding jewelry article 12 during cleaning. In particular, a grasping member, depicted as an alligator clip 14 that is treated to prevent scratching of the jewelry article, is attached to an interior 16 of a porous enclosure 18. In the illustrative embodiment, the porous enclosure 18 is provided by a

spring-handled basket tool 20 generally known for cleaning jewelry and for infusing loose tea. The porous enclosure 18 is thus provided by a selectively opened wire sphere 20 with a handle 22 biased to a closed position. The sphere 20 is formed from two pivoting hemispheres 24, 26, each contacting the other at a respective circular ring 28, 30. The lower ring 28 provides a convenient place for affixing (e.g., riveting, brazing) the clip 14.

[015] The components may be selected from materials suitable for the cleaning environment and thus be resistant to corrosion. A clip 14 should be selected for having a soft contacting portion that does not mar the jewelry article 14 and have a resilient closing strength suitable to hold the article without damage. It may be desirable to also include a locking ring (not shown) that slides along the handle 22 and has a diameter such that the handle 22 is squeezed to hold open the hemispheres 28, 30.

[016] In use, cleaning a jewelry article 12 is safely accomplished by clipping the jewelry article 12 to an interior of a basket that has porous openings to allow entry of a cleaning liquid. The basket is closed. Then the basket is positioned by an attached handle to expose the basket, and thereby the contained jewelry article 12, to the cleaning liquid (e.g., steam, ultrasonic, ammonia solution, etc.). With reference to FIG. 1, the tool 10 is initially closed and empty. In FIG. 2, the tool 10 is opened and the clip 14 is opened to receive a jewelry article 12. In FIG. 3, the jewelry article 12 has been clipped and the tool 10 closed for cleaning.

[017] While the present invention has been illustrated by description of several embodiments and while the illustrative embodiments have been described in considerable detail, it is not the intention of the applicant to restrict or in any way limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. Additional advantages and modifications

may readily appear to those skilled in the art. For example, other types of porous enclosures may be used that allow the introduction of cleaning steam, ultrasonic water, solutions, etc. Moreover, other types of selective openings may be used, such as a door. In addition, other grasping tools may be affixed to the interior of the enclosure. As another example, rather than relying upon spring action to close the tool 14 and the clip 14, affirming locking means may be employed.

[018] What is claimed is: